



EVERY DAY IN EVERY WAY

My USDA

A Progress Report for Employees on USDA's Cultural Transformation—Summary of Progress November 2010 Through February 2011

CULTURAL TRANSFORMATION
SUMMARY OF PROGRESS
Nov 2010 Through Feb 2011

USDA's CULTURAL TRANSFORMATION ACTION ITEMS

- LEADERSHIP
- RECRUITMENT
AND RETENTION
- TALENT
MANAGEMENT
- EMPLOYEE
DEVELOPMENT
- CUSTOMER FOCUS
AND COMMUNITY
OUTREACH

Inside this issue: A Summary of Cultural Transformation Progress at USDA

Progress in LEADERSHIP	2-3
Progress in RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION	4
Progress in TALENT MANAGEMENT	5
Progress in EMPLOYEE DEVELOPMENT	6
Progress in CUSTOMER FOCUS & COMMUNITY OUTREACH	7-8
EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT	9-10

As you know, creating a cultural transformation at USDA is one of my most important goals as Secretary. This special issue of My USDA includes a summary of the actions and initiatives currently underway throughout the Department to bring about the transformation.

There is still some confusion about just what the Cultural Transformation Initiative means in real terms. In other words, what does it look like and how do we implement it? What is your role to turn it into a reality?

Cultural Transformation is "the process of creating a workplace where all employees and customers are treated with dignity and respect and provided the opportunity for success."

What does Cultural Transformation look like and how do we achieve it?

In terms of personnel, it looks like a modern day snapshot of America. It includes a workforce that reflects the demographic make-up of the citizens we serve.

In terms of organization, Cultural Transformation means adapting to the technological advancements of social media and recognizing their cultural implications to our organizational performance. Our ability to effectively respond to our customer needs requires us to incorporate the most recent communication and information methods into our work culture. That doesn't mean abandoning customers who aren't online or tech-savvy, but it does mean recognizing that our work processes must be compatible with all our customers.

In managerial terms, it means embracing and promoting telework opportunities for employees and instituting innovative approaches to work, including job sharing and promoting the use of flexible work hours.

We achieve Cultural Transformation when it is simultaneously driven by top leadership and exercised by each individual employee. Each of us has a role to play. As a USDA employee, your role is to learn what the Cultural Transformation Initiative means for improving your day-to-day worklife.

Sign up for career development opportunities through AgLearn and the new USDA Virtual University.

Talk with your supervisors about teleworking or adjusting your work schedule if it will allow you to be more productive.

Get involved with your employee affinity groups and other organizations. They are a tremendous resource for career advancement and work opportunities.

Take advantage of USDA's Special Emphasis Programs, and get involved with these programs designed to improve recruitment, retention, and career advancement to African Americans, American Indians/Alaskan Natives, Asian Americans/Pacific Islanders, persons with disabilities, Gay/Lesbian/Bisexual/Transgender, Hispanics, veterans, and women.

Get to know your Civil Rights



Committee members because they are a valuable resource as well, and they exist to help ensure that at all employees are treated fairly.

Make training, education, and cultural transformation activities part of your Individual Development Plan, and make constructive suggestions for ways to improve the work processes or customer service.

Consider volunteering to help onboard a new employee, or step outside your comfort zone to take on a new duty as your work group begins to make changes and transform.

Cultural Transformation isn't something we wait around for, it's something we make happen, so I encourage you to be proactive and improve your worklife and career potential. Thank you for your commitment and dedication to the United States Department of Agriculture. I am proud of the work we do together, and I welcome your help in making USDA an even better place for both you and our customers.

Thomas J. Vilsack
Secretary

Secretary Vilsack Appoints Mission Areas Diversity Officers

As mentioned in the [2nd issue of My USDA](#), Secretary Vilsack's case for the Cultural Transformation of USDA was the creation of a high performing organization that values diversity and inclusion. To that end, the Diversity Road Map was created as a single living document to serve as a springboard for establishing viable diversity strategies that will apply across USDA and achieve measurable results for revolutionizing USDA's workforce of the future.

A major component of the Diversity Road Map is the goal for Leadership Accountability and Commitment- which led to Secretary Vilsack's appointment of eight Mission Area and three Staff Office "Diversity Officers." Diversity Officers are Senior Executive Service (SES)/GS-15s leaders that are charged with the awesome responsibility of being the watchdogs of the Diversity Road Map. The following is a list of USDA's Diversity Officers:

USDA Diversity Officer			
Agency	Name	Title	Phone Number
FSIS	Farook Sait	Director Office of Civil Rights	301-504-3976
RD	Clyde Thompson	Deputy Administrator for Operations and Management	202-692-0200
FNCS	Frank McDonough	Director Human Resources	703-605-1505
MRP	Joanne L. Munno	Deputy Administrator for Management	202-720-5213
REE	Jim Bradley	Deputy Administrator for Management	202-690-2575
NRE/NRCS	Eloris Speight	Deputy Administrator for Management	202-720-7847
FS/NRE	Charles L Myers	Deputy Administrator for Management	202-205-1707
FFAS	Phillip G. Short	Deputy Administrator for Management	202 720-3438
Staff Office	Name	Title	Phone Number
DM	Rick Swenson	Director Management Services	202-720-9824
OIG	Ronald Guillen	Director Diversity and Conflict Resolution	202-720-6902
NAD, OCE, OC, OCR, OGC	Carole Jett	Deputy Chief of Staff	202-720-3631

In addition, Anne Todd from AFSCME Local 3870 has been selected to be the union representative on the team. Ms. Todd is an employee of Rural Development.

The Diversity Officers will ensure that the goals and objectives are accomplished as outlined within the Road Map. Another requirement that is currently being pursued by the Diversity Officers is monthly reporting of Diversity, Disability, and Veterans demographic data, as it relates to new hires, promotions, separations, professional development, and the overall diversity landscape. This and many more Road Map initiatives are on the way.

CULTURAL TRANSFORMATION ACTION PLANS FROM MISSION AREAS

As the calendar year was coming to an end, teams within all USDA Mission Areas were busy putting the final touches on their Cultural Transformation Action Plans. These plans include a detailed communications plan and were submitted to the Cultural Transformation Task Force for review. Individuals who participated in the Cultural Transformation training at Wharton in December contributed input into their Mission Area plans based on information they learned there. Each team was encouraged to review the Mission Area feedback from the 2010 Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey and to identify areas where employees said the organization needed to improve.

Below are a few highlights of what has already been done and what is planned to move USDA forward in implementing Cultural Transformation:

The Forest Service plan calls for a series of briefings at leadership meetings, including Cultural Transformation in New Employee Orientation and during supervisory training, as well as developing employee training on cultural competencies.

The Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), an Agency within the Mission area of Marketing and Regulatory Programs, has held a series of Town Hall meetings to gather input from employees. Their action plan addresses issues raised by employees during those sessions, including a business practice re-engineering effort to simplify administrative and procedural processes. The APHIS plan also calls for developing a stakeholder engagement strategy and handbook to improve customer outreach.

The plan developed by the Economic Research Service includes All Hands meetings and developing an internal web portal to share information about Cultural Transformation.

As you can see, each Action Plan is customized to meet the unique challenges within the Mission Area to increase diversity, inclusion, and customer focus so that all employees and customers have the support they need to be successful. In the coming months, My USDA will provide updates from the Mission Areas as they continue to implement their plans.

LEADERSHIP PROGRESS

Cultural Transformation must be achieved with the full participation of managers and supervisors, and the Secretary is committed to ensuring that happens.

- We have built accountability into an improved performance appraisal process for supervisors and members of the Senior Executive Service (SES). USDA is holding its leaders accountable for key human capital decisions related to hiring, firing, promotions, management, and awards administration. <[My USDA, Volume 1, Issue 1](#)>
- In December, President Obama signed the historic 2010 Claims Resolution Act, bringing a conclusion to the Pigford II lawsuit, also known as the Black Farmers' settlement agreement. Secretary Vilsack said, "The Act will allow those that have been waiting to get the relief they deserve and have long been promised." <[My USDA, Volume 1, Issue 2](#)>
- USDA has created the Diversity Road Map to serve as a springboard for viable diversity recruitment efforts and to provide the Department's strategic focus to cultivate a diverse and inclusive workforce. <[My USDA, Volume 1, Issue 2](#)> See the latest information on the Diversity Road Map in this issue.
- The Department is requiring training officers and human resources personnel to attend cultural transformation training, and the new USDA SES Candidate Development Program is providing future leaders the tools they will need to succeed in a transformed work environment. <[My USDA, Volume 1, Issue 3](#)>



Secretary Vilsack addresses hundreds of USDA leaders about the ongoing Cultural Transformation Initiative.

SES FORUM FOCUSES ON CULTURAL TRANSFORMATION

Secretary Tom Vilsack, Deputy Secretary Kathleen Merrigan, Assistant Secretary for Administration Pearlie Reed, and a host of other USDA leaders addressed more than 300 SES and Senior Level and Scientific professionals at the SES forum on January 19, 2011 to highlight USDA's Cultural Transformation initiatives and to emphasize the importance of diversity and inclusion. The Secretary reminded our most senior leaders that our workforce should look like the people we serve. He said that empowerment and inclusion are key to ensuring employees are delivering our mission in these difficult budget times.

John Berry, Director of the Office of Personnel Management (OPM), congratulated USDA on the Cultural Transformation Initiative as part of his keynote address. Deputy Assistant Secretary for Administration, Dr. Alma Hobbs, reported on progress that has been shown during recent Focus Group sessions and Pulse Surveys (see *related article in TALENT MANAGEMENT section*). USDA's Chief Human Capital Officer, William P. Milton, Jr., shared a progress report on responses to the Employee Listening Sessions and the 80-item USDA Cultural Transformation Action Plan.

OPM Director John Berry addresses more than 300 participants at the 2nd annual SES Seminar in January.



Deputy Under Secretary Farm and Foreign Agriculture Service Michael Scuse (front). Behind Secretary Scuse are (left to right) Under Secretary for Food, Nutrition and Consumer Services Kevin Concannon; Deputy Under Secretary Research Education and Economics Ann M. Bartuska; Office of Food Safety Chief of Staff Adela Ramos; Under Secretary for Marketing and

Regulatory Programs Ed Avalos; and Under Secretary for Rural Development Dallas Tonsager.



RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION PROGRESS

An honest and successful cultural transformation includes acknowledgement of the mistakes made in the past in order to find opportunities to do better. The Cultural Transformation Initiative is a vehicle for change and improvement in USDA's recruitment and retention efforts.

- We are ensuring accountability for liability findings against USDA and will continue to hold supervisors and managers accountable for their management decisions. <[My USDA, Volume 1, Issue 1](#)>
- Recruitment and retention of veterans at USDA is drastically improving under the new Veterans Employment Program. <[My USDA, Volume 1, Issue 1](#)>
- The Department fully supports workplace flexibilities and the use of Telework and highly encouraged Department-wide participation in National Telework Week February 14-18, 2011. <[My USDA, Volume 1, Issue 2](#)>
- USDA is implementing Federal hiring reforms as a result of USDA employee feedback. <[My USDA, Volume 1, Issue 3](#)>
- USDA's work environment is friendly to new parents and nursing mothers, and new guidance is available for employees and supervisors. <[My USDA, Volume 1, Issue 3](#)>
- You now have an opportunity to earn a bonus if you can successfully refer a suitable candidate for a position within USDA. <[My USDA, Volume 1, Issue 3](#)>

USDA WINS THE OPM CHALLENGE TO INCREASE FEDERAL EMPLOYMENT OF INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES

In January, John Berry, Director of the Office of Personnel Management (OPM), challenged the Chief Human Capital Officers (CHCO) of Federal agencies to increase Federal employment of individuals with disabilities. Director Berry repeated this challenge when he spoke to USDA's Senior Executive Development Seminar on January 19th. This challenge was consistent with the Executive Order 13548 signed in July 2010 by President Barack Obama directing OPM to work with agencies to increase the hiring of individuals with disabilities. One of the steps that OPM has taken to implement the Executive Order is to share a monthly register with Agencies of applicants with disabilities. Individuals listed on the register can be hired directly using the Schedule A authority. The resumes of individuals on the register are provided by Bender Consulting Services. In the February CHCO meeting, Mr. William P. Milton, Jr.,

USDA's CHCO, reported that USDA made job offers to 11 individuals from the register. This was more than any other Department during this time period. Of those, DM made 4 offers, APHIS-MRP made 3 offers,

The types of positions filled included IT Specialists positions in the human resources disciplines, as well as analyst and enforcement specialists. The grade levels for the offers ranged from GS-5 to GS-12, with 6 of the 10 positions being at the GS-11 or higher. This represents a step forward to reach USDA's overall goal to increase our employment of individuals with targeted disabilities from where it is now—at nearly 1%—to 2%. In the coming months, we will share more information with you about our progress to reach this goal.

"Today, only 5 percent of the federal workforce is made up of Americans with disabilities—far below the proportion of Americans with disabilities in the general population, so we're going to boost recruitment, we're going to boost training, and we're going to boost retention."

—President Obama

USDA HIRING MORE WORKERS WITH EXPERIENCE

The average age of the typical Federal worker today is 47. Twenty-five percent of the Federal workforce is 55 or older, and 19% of the present workforce is already eligible for retirement. With these kinds of figures, it is not difficult to see that our pool of talent needs to prepare itself to bring on experienced employees. Robin Heard, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Administration with the Office of the Secretary, presented information at the February CHCO Academy about what USDA is doing to hire experienced workers. These experienced workers often possess high-demand specialized skills and institutional knowledge, and they are willing to mentor others to help them grow and develop in their careers. Deputy Assistant Secretary Heard told the audience about the Agriculture Conservation Experienced Service (ACES) program to employ experienced workers that was authorized by Congress for USDA's National Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). Through this program, 150 experienced workers were hired during fiscal year 2010. Sixty-five percent of these individuals were previously employed with USDA. These individuals are able to provide specialized expertise, mentoring, and knowledge transfer as part of succession planning. The program uses the National Older Worker Career Center to locate individuals with the experience needed by USDA. This is another example of USDA's commitment to hiring a diverse workforce.

TALENT MANAGEMENT PROGRESS

The most productive workforce is one that is happy and satisfied- and managing the talent at work throughout the Department is an important element in a successful cultural transformation.

- We have expanded the Secretary's Honor Awards and are recognizing more employees for their achievements. <[My USDA Volume 1, Issue 1](#)>
- USDA is implementing an innovative Employee Onboarding Program to provide new employees with a smooth and effortless transition into the Department's workforce. <[My USDA Volume 1, Issue 2](#)>
- Employees are getting much-needed training that includes improving workforce management standards by acting on the feedback provided by employees via the annual FedView survey of federal employee workplace satisfaction. <[My USDA Volume 1, Issue 3](#)>
- USDA recently hosted a government-wide training event on increasing Federal employment of individuals with disabilities. <[My USDA Volume 1, Issue 3](#)>

challenges, and more.

Each group was asked identical questions related to employee's degree of understanding of and commitment to cultural transformation. Participants were asked to describe leadership commitment to cultural transformation, positive activities that have resulted from the process, and challenges to achieving Initiative goals. The groups also were asked for their recommendations to further the process.

The results show that employees believe a full commitment to the Cultural Transformation Initiative includes comprehensive employee training, improved communication, and greater understanding of the meaning of cultural transformation. Focus group participants also want to see accountability for measurable accomplishments by leaders.

Focus Groups Give National, Field Voice to Cultural Transformation

Just how well is Secretary Vilsack's Cultural Transformation

Initiative going? Recently, USDA conducted a series of focus groups with a diverse group of employees from across the Department. The goal of the Cultural Transformation Initiative is to achieve an employee-friendly culture that allows all employees an equal opportunity to succeed. Participating Agencies included AMS, GIPSA, FAS, REE, ARS, FNS, RD, OCIO, USFS, APHIS, FSA, FSIS, NASS, and NRCS. Care was taken to invite the opinions of a wide cross section of the employee base.

In December, more than 60 people participated in six focus group sessions in Washington, DC. As a member of the Cultural Transformation Task Force, Darlene Barnes, the Regional Administrator for the FNS Mountain Plains Regional Office, also organized a series of four focus groups involving 45 USDA employees from agencies across Denver and Fort Collins, CO.

"It is critical to hear the voice of the field on this important effort because the USDA team is spread far and wide across big cities and small towns," said Barnes. "Employees were excited to participate and happy to be heard."

Participants spanned the spectrum of government service rating, title, tenure, age, gender, ethnicity, physical

POLICY ISSUED ON INDIVIDUAL DEVELOPMENT PLANNING

The Departmental Regulation (DR) on Creating Individual Development Plans has been issued to ensure that supervisors work with all employees who want an IDP to establish one. The DR is posted on the USDA web site at

<http://www.ocio.usda.gov/directives/doc/DR4040-410.pdf>.

Some Agencies will need to engage with their labor unions to implement the DR.

The IDP represents a commitment to growing and developing employees towards advancement in their careers. It is a plan that demonstrates the value of USDA employees and, as such, they are an important part of succession planning in that they help employees develop skills that will be needed both now and in the future.

As part of long-term career planning, employees, supervisors and training managers can use IDPs to outline training, and more importantly, create activities that will lead to a more engaged, effective, and skilled workforce.

A new IDP website is also available to provide guidance and tools for the creation and use of IDPs. That site is at:

<http://www.idp.usda.gov/>.

Creating an IDP is a shared responsibility between you and your supervisor. You are responsible for working with your supervisor to create and maintain an IDP and for taking responsibility for identifying opportunities for self development and improvement on a continual basis.

Supervisors are responsible for ensuring employees have an IDP and that the IDP remains current; providing feedback to employees about job strengths and areas for improvement; and supporting employee training and development, providing training opportunities and funding if related to the Department's mission, and ensuring funds are available.

GOAL: At least 80% of eligible USDA employees will have an IDP by September 1, 2011

To reach that goal, both supervisors and employees will receive training on how to create an IDP. The use of AgLearn for developing and maintaining IDPs is encouraged because it provides an effective way for Agencies to track the number of IDPs in progress, and it is linked to the employee's training record. The online class called, "AgLearn IDP Course," is a helpful resource for persons who want to learn how to create an IDP using the AgLearn too. Agencies will incorporate an overview regarding IDPs into all new employee onboarding programs and new supervisor training.

Your IDP is a critical employee development tool that will help us create the culture of inclusion, diversity, and high performance at USDA that we are striving to achieve.

EMPLOYEE DEVELOPMENT PROGRESS

One of the consistent messages management heard from employees throughout last year's series of Employee Listening Sessions was the need for more employee development opportunities. As a result, USDA took action to address key areas of improvement and some top initiatives are listed below:

- We launched the USDA Virtual University to provide expanded training and other developmental resources to employees. <[My USDA, Volume 1, Issue 1](#)>
- There is a new and improved AgLearn offering you additional opportunities to enhance your knowledge, skills, and abilities <[My USDA, Volume 1, Issue 2](#)>.
- We are placing a renewed emphasis on making Individual Development Plans work for you <[My USDA, Volume 1, Issue 1](#)>
- We are making Cultural Transformation training an integral part of preparing USDA managers and supervisors for success in a diverse and inclusive workforce. <[My USDA, Volume 1, Issue 3](#)>

IDENTIFYING A WORK DETAIL IS ABOUT TO GET A WHOLE LOT EASIER!

Career advancement usually requires gaining experience in an unfamiliar work area. Finding opportunities to get that experience is now going to be a lot less complicated with the release of the new Detail Registry. The Registry is currently being piloted in USDA's office of Departmental Management. The Registry provides employees with a central mechanism to post personal criteria for locating a work detail in alignment with their personal goals for career development. It also offers the agencies' designated HR professional the ability to log-in and search lists of employees, allowing them to identify potential candidates for their available detail assignments. They will also be able to post specific job information about the detail positions they have available. Before the launch of the new Detail Registry, there was not a mechanism for matching details to detailees beyond word of mouth and email forwards, so the Registry will be an important way to share that information across USDA. The roll-out date for the Detail Registry is targeted to take place in March when it will be delivered to employees everywhere.

CUSTOMER FOCUS AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH PROGRESS

USDA and Labor Reps Form Partnership Council

USDA's latest collaboration with labor representatives is the Partnership Council, a Labor Management Forum chartered by Rural Development. The Council's formation is a response to the President's Executive Order 13522, which directed Federal agencies to create stronger relationships with employee labor organizations. With the full support of the Deputy Under Secretary, the Partnership Council participated in National Telework Week, February 14 – 18, 2011, by requesting managers to schedule telework days for employees to the maximum extent possible.

Authentic cultural transformation must include a focus on the customer and a plan for community outreach. USDA is taking proactive steps to forge relationships that will improve work/life and overall productivity.

- USDA has answered President Obama's call to work collaboratively with Federal Employee labor organizations. <[My USDA Volume 1, Issue 1](#)>
- We are improving employee work/life thanks to enthusiastic participation in new labor-management forums. <[My USDA Volume 1, Issue 2](#)>
- We are establishing stronger working relationships with employee affinity groups and associations. <[My USDA Volume 1, Issue 2](#)>
- USDA is partnering with more organizations that will assist us in creating and maintaining an inclusive and diverse workforce. <[My USDA Volume 1, Issue 3](#)>



Pictured (left to right), Clyde Thompson, Deputy Administrator for Operations and Management and Co-Chair of the Partnership Council;

Debra S. Arnold, President, AFSCME Local 3870, Rural Development and Co-Chair of the Partnership Council; and

Retha Oliver, Acting Director, Human Resources.

(not pictured: LaShonda DeBrew, Executive Vice President, AFSCME Local 3870; and Christopher Ketner, Union Member)

My USDA Staff:

Karen A. Messmore—*Editorial Director*

William P. Milton, Jr.—*Deputy Editorial Director*

Perry Stevens—*Editor-in-Chief*

Mika Cross—*Lead Editor*

Melanie Clemons—*Editor*

Key Contributors:

Monshi Ramdass, Karlease Kelly, Zina Sutch, David Dissinger, Anita Adkins, Alison Levy, Allen Hatcher, Patty L. Moore, Robinn DeCecco, Ronald S. James,

Stuart Bender

If you have ideas for future articles, contact us at

MyUSDA@dm.usda.gov

LABOR UNIONS AND MANAGEMENT WORKING TOGETHER TO TRANSFORM USDA

The Department-wide National Labor Management Forum is made up of representatives from the seven national unions with representation rights for USDA employees and senior leadership from USDA mission areas and the office of the Assistant Secretary for Administration. The purpose of the USDA Forum is to improve the delivery of USDA's mission, work for higher levels of employee morale, and promote collaboration between management and labor unions. The USDA Forum was among the first group of Federal departments to get its implementation plan approved in April 2010.

The Forum quickly agreed to its charter in June 2010, and got to work immediately on a number of key cultural transformation issues, such as creating new Departmental Regulations (DRs) on Individual Development Plans (<http://www.ocio.usda.gov/directives/doc/DR4040-410.pdf>) and setting Department-wide standards for agencies to improve the onboarding process for new employees.

Other important updates to DRs include:

- Telework Program
([http://www.ocio.usda.gov/directives/doc/Telework%204080-811-002_V10_110114%20-%20FINAL%20\(3\).pdf](http://www.ocio.usda.gov/directives/doc/Telework%204080-811-002_V10_110114%20-%20FINAL%20(3).pdf)),
- Employee Awards and Recognition
(<http://www.ocio.usda.gov/directives/doc/DR4040-451-1.pdf>),
- Personnel Management of USDA Employees Assigned to Reconstruction and Stabilization Activities
(<http://www.ocio.usda.gov/directives/doc/DR4030-002.pdf>), and
- Excused Absence/Administrative Leave
(<http://www.ocio.usda.gov/directives/doc/DR-4060-630-002%20Admin%20Leave.pdf>).

USDA Signs Official Partnership Agreement with National Hispanic Association of Federal Executives (NAHFE)

On February 18, 2011 Assistant Secretary for Administration (ASA) Pearlie S. Reed and President of National Hispanic Association of Federal Executives (NAHFE) Al Gallegos signed an official Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) dedicated to a long lasting partnership and collaboration geared towards enhancing progress of Hispanic employees into the Senior Executive Service (SES) ranks. As you may know, this initiative is designed to establish commitment with a diverse coalition of national Employees organizations and associations to assist USDA to meet our diversity challenges.



The USDA Forum is working on a number of other issues raised by employees through the Cultural Transformation Initiative that will be reported in future editions of *My USDA*.

Assistant Secretary for Administration Pearlie S. Reed; National President, NAHFE Al Gallegos; Marian M. Romero, USDA Hispanic American Cultural Effort (HACE) member; Richard Chavez, USDA HACE Member; Oscar Gonzales, Office of Intergovernmental Affairs; Dr. Alma Hobbs, Deputy Secretary for Administration; Richard Fierroz, DM; and Alexandra Sifuentes-Carnes, HACE member.



USDA-Forest Service Fire Management Officer Shawna Legarza

Shawna Legarza is one of those people who make you proud to be part of USDA. She works for the USDA-Forest Service as a Fire Management Officer on the San Juan Public Lands, and she's devoted the past 23 years to wildland fire management.

She's also getting her PhD in Psychology with an emphasis on Organizational Leadership. She decided to combine her academic knowledge with more than two decades of professional experience to create a brand new program to help veterans.

Shawna was one of the many firefighters who worked at the World Trade Center Recovery site in 2001. With the memories of 9/11 still fresh, she was inspired to help military men and women make a successful transition back into civilian worklife when they leave the service.

The result is the Southwest Conservation Corporation (SCC) Veteran Wildland Fire and Leadership Development Program in Durango, CO. This pilot program has proven successful with its first batch of military veterans becoming seasonal employees of USDA-Forest Service San Juan Public Lands.

Veterans enrolled in the program receive all the mandatory training and equipment to become certified as a Firefighter Type 2, in accordance with FS 5109.17 and BLM 310-1.

Veterans who complete the program and are eligible for a Veterans Recruitment Appointment (VRA) will be considered for employment by the USDA-Forest Service. Appointments may begin at grade GS-03 to GS-05 in Forestry Aid and Forestry Technician GS-0462. The career ladder for entry level firefighter is GS-03 and GS-04.

Shawna Legarza's innovative idea is helping veterans, and it's helping the entire Department by bringing on more qualified employees. Her work is an important part of making USDA's Cultural Transformation happen.

*For information on the
Veteran Firefighter Corps
training program, con-
tact Shawna Legarza,
Fire Management Officer
Columbine Field Office
970-884-1427 work
slegarza@fs.fed.us*



Vicki Anderson, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Michigan.

The Spotlight's on YOU!

"I have been teleworking for almost a year. I have frequent email and phone conversations with staff from national headquarters and 8 of the states. My teleworking is seamless for them – they don't know if I am working from home or from the office. Although I have a fairly short commute of 20 minutes, the time and expense I save is important to me. I can take 15 minutes of leave to pick my son up from an afterschool activity instead of taking an hour of leave if I were working at the office. Despite the blizzard this week that shutdown our office, I was able to continue working."

—Vicki Anderson, NRCS, East Lansing, MI



Zina Sutch, PhD, is USDA's Chief Training Officer and the Deputy Provost of the USDA Virtual University.

USDA's Chief Training Officer, Dr. Zina Sutch, was a recent guest on the FEDTalk Radio Show to talk about effective communication in the workplace.

She appeared on AM 1500 on Friday, February 11th to talk about the USDA Virtual University as well as ways to improve communication with your supervisor.

During her interview, Dr. Sutch explained the three components that are planned for the Virtual University: the Academy for Interns and Scholars, the School of Talent Management open to all USDA employees, and the College of Leadership and Professional Development.

A recording of the entire hour long program, including other speakers sharing information of interest to Federal managers, can be found at this [link](http://federalnewsradio.com/?sid=2266750&nid=48&hw=fma#): <http://federalnewsradio.com/?sid=2266750&nid=48&hw=fma#>

In March, Dr. Sutch will speak at the Federal Managers Association (FMA) Management Training Seminar. This is a result of USDA's Memorandum of Understanding with FMA that creates more opportunities for information and resources sharing that will benefit employees.

USDA'S TELEWORK PROGRAM MANAGER WINS TOP "TURF AWARD"

Of more than 50 submissions for the new "Turf Award"- determined and awarded by the Telework Exchange during National Telwork Week to individuals who nominated their home office space- the top winner with the most votes was none other than Mika J. Cross, USDA's new Work/Life and Wellness Program Manager! Mika (below left) won for her home video, USDA Telework Cribs, that she submitted on YouTube. Mika lives in Waldorf, Maryland and works from her home office 2-3 days per week. Her winning video was also featured in an article about Telework Week on WTOP.com at: www.wtop.com/?nid=46&sid=2272361

Another USDA employee was recognized in the national contest for his home office photo. Alan Mowbray (below right) is with the El Yunque National Forest as part of his work with the Forest Service in Luquillo, Puerto Rico.



You can view more details about the Turf Award Winners at www.teleworkexchange.com/teleworkweek/turfawards/ or watch Mika's video on YouTube by searching for, "USDA TELEWORK CRIBS". Drop us a line via e-mail at MYUSDA@dm.usda.gov with anything you'd like to share about your telework experience.

USDA saw some tremendous cost savings during National Telework Week (Feb 14-18) when a total of 529 of you pledged to telework at least part of that week.

\$35,387.15 - Total dollars saved during Telework Week

47,545.25 - Pounds of pollutants prevented (or **23.77 TONS!**) of pollutants prevented that same week

\$1,021,452 - Total amount saved by teleworking one day a week for a year

1,351,166 pounds (or **675.58 tons!**) of pollutants prevented by teleworking one day a week for a year